



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Summary Meeting Minutes
September 21, 2010**

I. Call to Order & Introductions: Bill Gray, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Commission on Veterans Affairs (CVA). Bill asked for all present to please stand for a moment of silence for all of those who have given their lives and those who have been wounded for our country in the different conflicts in which our country has been engaged in and to remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Approval of Minutes: Rich Fales, Commissioner, moved to approve the June Meeting Summary Minutes. Roland Kauffman, Commissioner, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the June Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes will be online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

III. Plans for Veterans Day Program and Celebration ~ Bill Gray, Chair

There will be a Veterans Day Program and Celebration to be held November 11th, 2010, at the Silver Spring Civic Building. Chair Bill Gray and Commissioners Sharon Hodge and Rich Schiffauer are involved. County Executive Isiah Leggett is scheduled to present a proclamation at noon. Other presentations include the laying of three wreaths at the base of the three flags on Veterans Plaza, two Color Guards, and a reading of the fallen soldiers of Montgomery County. Programs include workshops, panel discussions, and various Veteran Service Organizations. Rich Schiffauer noted that one of the workshops will focus on women veterans. Susan Hoffman, Marketing Director, Silver Spring Civic Building, will be the master of ceremonies. The free event is scheduled to be held from noon to 6:00pm followed by a free tribute concert from 7:00pm to 9:00pm. The Committee is still working to include Gold Star families and veterans from World War II, Korean War, Vietnam, Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). They are specifically looking for female veterans of OIF and OEF. If you know of any veterans that would like to be included in the celebration, please contact Bill Gray or the Commission office at 240-777-1246.

Update on Services to Veterans from Congressman Chris Van Hollen's Office ~ Ann Humphrey

Congressman Van Hollen met with Sandy Garfunkel, former Director of the VA Washington DC Medical Center, and Fernando Rivera, Director, Veterans Affairs Medical Center at a VA Capital Health Care Network (VISN 5) and pressed them about a need for a Community-Based Outreach Clinic. They handed out a map where the CBOC's are located in Maryland, showing that there are none located in Montgomery County, which is home to 50,000 veterans. Congressman Van Hollen is following up with a letter. In September, Secretary Chow, Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs, met with Van Hollen's staff to discuss how they could work together on veterans issues. They discussed the need for a Veterans Service Officer (VSO) in Montgomery County. Currently, there is one VSO who works 12 hours a month in Wheaton who serves the 50,000 veterans in Montgomery County as well as the 68,000 veterans in Prince Georges County. Ann asked Commissioners to encourage veterans in the area to call Gary Brown, VSO for Montgomery County, to prove there is a need. Gary can be reached at 301-248-0463 (V).

V. Update on Executive Regulation to Allow for Donations to Commission ~ Mike Subin, Commissioner

An Executive Regulation was drafted by Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison, modeling one written for Martin Luther King, Jr., Day as a basis. This executive regulation would authorize members of the Commission on Veterans Affairs and staff who provide support to the Commission (“authorized employees”) to solicit gifts and/or donations for the purpose of recognizing veterans in public displays/exhibits in county buildings and to raise funds related to the acquisition, care, and display of materials in accordance with the requirements established in the order. A mechanism for tracking donors will be devised and we will work with DGS on how to store items. At this point it has not been determined who will be in charge of the monetary donations.

VI. Update on Veterans Collaborative ~ Rich Schiffauer, Commissioner

Rich gave a brief background on the history of the Veterans Collaborative. The Collaborative was introduced in September, 2008, and coordinates Montgomery County’s efforts to serve veterans with similar efforts undertaken by the State, and to ensure that services are not being duplicated. Original members included Montgomery County Health and Human Services/Behavioral Health & Crisis Services, Montgomery County Mental Health Association, and Maryland’s Commitment to Veterans. 25 more partners have been added in the last year and a half. Meetings are held every other month for information sharing and analysis of needs.

Rich discussed different projects the Collaborative has undertaken. They worked with the Maryland’s Commitment to Veterans key stakeholders group comprised of members appointed by the Lt. Governor to assist the Maryland’s Commitment to Veterans Project Coordinator to design a certification training program for behavioral health clinicians who have expressed an interest in providing services to veterans. The goal of the training certification program was to ensure clinicians were culturally competent on military culture, combat PTSD, and Traumatic Brain Injury. The training was held on October 19th, 2009, and over 90 clinicians were trained and certified.

Professor Rose Sachs of Montgomery College’s Combat2College Program asked if a similar program could be replicated for the college. The Collaborative designed and implemented a panel discussion series titled “The Cost of Freedom” that would focus on issues of important to veterans. The panel discussions will be taped by Montgomery College and will be aired on Montgomery College television and on Montgomery Community Cable. Copies of the taped series will be provided to Montgomery County Public Libraries and Montgomery County Public Schools. The first taping was held on June 24th and featured a Gold Star mother, an Iraq veteran, and an individual who significant other had gone through multiple deployments. A panel discussion is scheduled to tape in March, 2011, that will focus on women veterans for Women’s History Month.

The Collaborative is also working with the VA to bring telemental health services to the Health and Human Services site at 1301 Piccard Drive in Rockville. The VA is currently working with the County Attorney’s office to draft a Memorandum of Understanding. Telemental health services will allow veterans to go to the County’s Crisis Center and talk with a clinician via television. Ken Barnum, VA Outreach Social Worker, would be able to also process housing vouchers out of this location.

VII. Chair and Vice Chair Report:

Bill Gray, Chair, will meet with the County Council Health & Human Services (HHS) Committee this Friday, September 24th at 8:30am to present the Commission’s Top Two Policy Issues for Fiscal Year 2011. He thanked the Commissioners for their input.

Bill will be representing the Commission at the quarterly Veteran Service Officer (VSO) meeting on Friday, September 24th at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in D.C. Bill will also be attending a meeting this Thursday, September 23rd for a County Task Force to investigate roadside solicitation of money due to safety of individuals and uncertainty of donations. Bethesda has parking meters set up to receive donations with the money going towards Bethesda Cares, which provides direct services to individuals who are homeless.

The [2nd Annual Bubba's Belly Run](#) is being held this Sunday, September 26th. Bubba's Belly Run is a 501(c)(3) organization held in honor of Captain Brian "Bubba" Bunting, who was killed while serving in Afghanistan in February 2009. All proceeds go directly toward supporting the families of fallen service members.

Bill appointed Commissioners Carl Bedell, Rich Fales, and Mauri Hamilton to a Nominating Committee to nominate a slate of officers for Chair and Vice Chair. Mauri will chair the Nominating Committee.

VIII. Project Updates:

Ken Barnum, VA Outreach Social Worker, gave an update on the 25 Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers that were given to Montgomery County. Processing of the vouchers began August 5th and as of September 20th 24 out of the 25 vouchers have been issued to homeless veterans. Of the 24 veterans issued vouchers, 5 have located housing. Ken said that Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) has done an outstanding job providing 24-hour turn around on processing applications. Once a veteran has a completed application, they locate a landlord who will rent to them and the veteran returns to HOC for a Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA). HOC sends out an inspector to survey the location, which typically takes five days. In DC this process takes approximately 60 days. Ken proposed that the Commission send a letter of commendation to HOC to recognize their work on behalf of veterans. Pete Esker, Commissioner, made a motion for the Commission to write a letter of commendation to HOC recognizing their work on behalf of veterans. Mauri Hamilton, Commissioner, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved. Ken also asked if the Commission could send a separate letter to HOC requesting more vouchers as he has five veterans who are homeless who need housing. Congress currently has a bill to issue 10,000 more vouchers next year. If the bill passes, the Commission will need to send another letter to request 25 vouchers.

IX. Updates / Motions for Commission Action:

Lorrie Knight-Major, Commissioner, shared that the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Grant RFP came out June 30th requesting a brief proposal. The grant required that a local community foundation had to nominate an organization for this money. It is a matching grant that will provide \$500K over four years. The Community Foundation nominated Easter Seals, which submitted a budget of approximately \$1.6M over four years. Funding would go towards direct services for veterans. Stage two of the application is due November 10th. Easter Seals is hosting a meeting with Chuck Short during the week of October 4th to discuss grant strategy. Commissioners are invited to attend and provide input. Letters of commitment from the fund providers are required.

X. Roundtable:

Congressman Van Hollen announced that servicemen and women who served under stop-loss orders have until October 21, 2010 to apply for retroactive pay.

Rich Schiffauer, Commissioner, announced that nVideoConferences will be hosting a Veterans Extravaganza 2010 on Wednesday, November 3rd, 2010. Veterans and their family members will have an opportunity to apply for jobs and educational scholarships, obtain expert advice during seminars and

workshops covering topics ranging from health care, small business, home buying, personal finance, G.I. Bill and much more. Activities for children will also be available. The event is free. To register to attend, visit www.nVideoConferences.com. The Commission will be hosting a table. If you are interested in staffing the Commission's table, please contact Rich at 240-777-1724 (V) or e-mail Richard.Schiffauer@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Carl Bedell, Commissioner, announced that the [American Freedom Foundation](http://AmericanFreedomFoundation.org) is holding an American Freedom Festival concert series on October 9th at the Patriot Center in Fairfax, VA. The concert will pay tribute to the men and woman of America's armed forces and raise money for various organizations that support our veterans, active duty military, wounded warriors and their families. Hank Williams, Jr., is headlining the concert. Carl also announced that [Hero Dogs, Inc.](http://HeroDogs.com), a non-profit corporation whose purpose is to train and place service dogs with military veterans who have been injured and/or disabled while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces, is seeking two individuals to join the Board of Directors. If you are interested, please contact Carl at 301-460-4644 (V) or e-mail carl@carlbedell.com.

Roland Kauffman, Commissioner, discussed setting up a Veterans Treatment Court in Montgomery County. Mike Subin, Commissioner, is concerned that there are not enough resources to create a separate court for veterans. Carl noted that the Veterans Treatment Court in Buffalo requires no additional costs. The court expenses already exist and there are volunteers from the local veterans community. He suggested that the Commission write a letter to County Executive Isiah Leggett about this issue. Due to a shortage of time, the discussion was tabled for next meeting's agenda.

Mike Dobridge, Public, is a representative for American Legion Post 68. They are working on creating a veterans hotline. He will keep the Commission posted on it's development.

Jim Campbell, Public, brought to the Commission's attention that the Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center is flying an American flag, a Maryland flag, and a Montgomery County flag at night without proper lighting.

Adjournment: 7:30pm

Next Full Commission Meeting: Tuesday, October 19th, 2010, from 6:00pm to 7:30pm at 401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, MD in the 1st Floor Tan Conference Room.

Respectively submitted,
Carly Clem, OSC
Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison